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ABSTRACT

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) has worked with the University of Houston, Texas Southern University, the Houston Community College to develop a program to prevent rapid staff turnover in urban schools. Part of the program is aimed at recruiting high school students who live in urban areas and training them as potential teachers. Other facets of the program concentrate on inservice training and support of urban teachers. The program is designed to provide participants with knowledge of urban life and with specific skills to enable them to work effectively with students and parents in inner cities. Five components characterize the program: (1) work-study for teacher aides; (2) paid work experience for junior and senior college students as substitute teachers; (3) retraining and recertification of teachers to attract and hold the best qualified teachers and those who can teach in critical subject areas; (4) inservice substitute teacher training; and (5) a proposed magnet school specifically for high school juniors and seniors who are interested in careers as classroom teachers, teacher aides, and substitute teachers. (FG)

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UNIVERSITY AND SCHOOL DISTRICT COOPERATION:
A SYSTEM FOR GROWING YOUR OWN QUALITY URBAN TEACHERS

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Inner city schools are characterized by rapid staff turnover. Without question such staff instability has a detrimental effect on school climate, morale and student learning. Teacher "burn-out" and high turnover in urban schools, while not a new phenomenon, does seem to be increasing exponentially. It is evident that many new teachers, when placed in the predominately minority-populated inner city schools, are not prepared to meet the challenges such an environment contains.

Beyond the uneasy speculation that the social and economic rewards of teaching are not sufficient to encourage many to engage in the difficult task of preparing to teach in the urban schools, there is also the speculation that a distinct lack of "urban enculturation" on the part of many entrants into the teaching profession foredooms success. Further, stories about downtown "blackboard jungles" abound and discourage many potential teachers from ever seeking employment in city school systems.

Coupled with the problem of attracting many teachers, urban districts have difficulty retaining teachers long enough for them to acquire the specialized skills necessary for good performance—much less survival—in these schools. Again, a lack of urban enculturation ill-equips many to productively survive in what frequently is a most unfamiliar social environment. The facts of life in the placement of teachers newly recruited to an urban system are well known and operate to continue the problem, viz., a vacancy occurs in a "difficult" school; the vacancy is filled by a "new hire". The "new hire" either is unable to cope for long in the culturally different setting and quits, or copes successfully just long enough to parlay the experience into a "less stressful" job in the suburbs. Thus the cycle continues, and since the schools with a higher turnover rate are the predominately minority schools; more of these youngsters are affected by the debilitation which occurs as a result of an unstable learning environment. The sad fact is those children most in need of stability are least likely to get it.

A new multi-faceted program in Houston, the result of the joint efforts of public school personnel and three local institutions of higher education, offers promise of a major breakthrough in the solution of this problem. The district has developed a program for recruiting teachers, has provided incentive pay in targeted schools, and has institutionalized staff development processes which provide peer support and professional growth for new teachers. Recognizing the impact of urban enculturation on ultimate success as an urban teacher, the Houston Independent School District (H.I.S.D.) has begun a program of "growing your own teachers". Also significant is that the program has come about as a result of a combination of talent from public school, university and college sources.

H.I.S.D., in concert with the University of Houston, Texas Southern University, and Houston Comunity College, has developed a complex program to recruit, train and retrain persons who may be interested in teaching in the urban setting. The program is especially beamed at those who live in the city. Entitled "The System for Growing Your Own Quality Urban Teachers", the program is depicted in Figure 1. Essentially, the program is designed to equip potential teachers with both a knowledge of life in the urban environment so that cultural disorientation is avoided and with specific skills to work effectively with students and parents from the inner city communities.

Potential teachers at the high school level are provided a special program which involves assistance from college and university professors and community members both on and off their high school campus. When these students attend colleges and universities at one of the campuses of the cooperating institutions, they are provided an opportunity to serve the Houston Independent School District, with pay, as substitute teachers and teacher aides. Thus, needed additional experience in working with students in urban school settings is gained. These students also "intern" or "student teach" in inner city schools and ultimately are available for employment by the District as teachers. This training enables these future Houston Independent School District teachers to become

A SYSTEM FOR GROWING YOUR OWN QUALITY URBAN TEACHERS

A COOPERATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

AND

HOUSTON'S PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

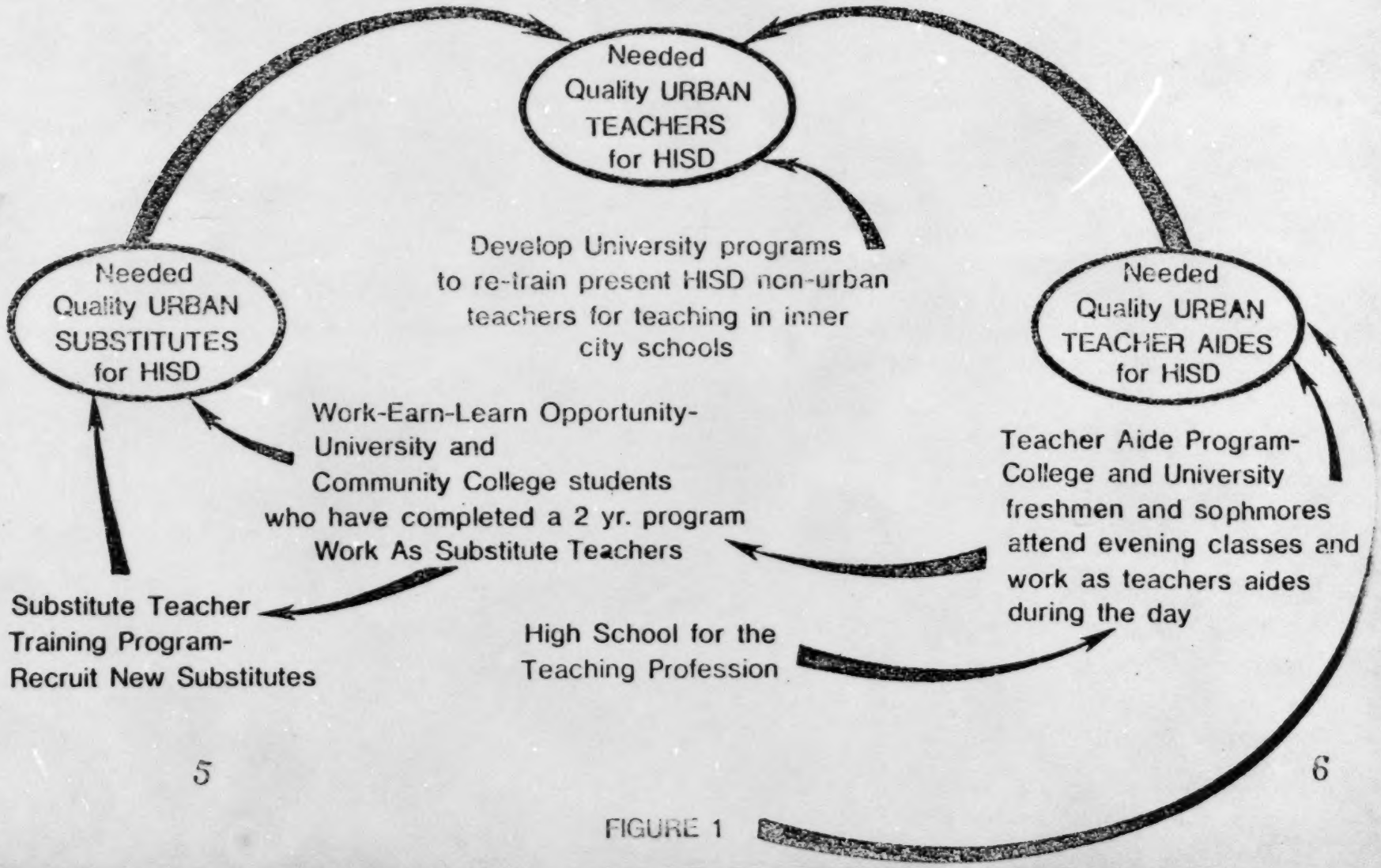
Needed Quality URBAN TEACHERS for HISD
Develop University programs to re-train present HISD non-urban teachers for teaching in inner city schools
Needed Quality URBAN SUBSTITUTES for HISD
Needed Quality URBAN TEACHER AIDES for HISD
Work-Earn-Learn Opportunity- University and Community College students who have completed a 2 yr. program Work As Substitute Teachers
Teacher Aide Program- College and University freshmen and sophmores attend evening classes and work as teachers aides during the day
Substitute Teacher Training Program- Recruit New Substitutes
High School for the Teaching Profession

FIGURE 1

acclimated to the urban school environment and to be more likely to understand and cope effectively with inner city behavior and learning problems.

This program has three major thrusts. First is the identification and preparation of high school students in the Houston Independent School District who show interest in becoming teachers. Second is the development of support systems at the College and University levels which assist in maintaining student interest as well as attempt to achieve a low drop-out rate. (College and university level attrition rates of potential teachers currently are high, particularly of Hispanic students.) Third is a program for retraining teachers to provide more adequate skills for success in the urban school. The system contains five components.

Houston Community College/University of Houston/Texas Southern University Teacher Aide Program: For several years the Houston Independent School District has funded a program enabling instructional aides to attend classes at Houston Community College and, upon completion of sixty-six semester hours, to obtain an Associate Degree in Applied Science. With more aides interested in enrolling in the Houston Community College Program and in increasing number completing the Associate Degree, the Houston Independent School District has developed a program in cooperation with the University of Houston College of Education and the School of Education at Texas Southern University to offer the second two years of an educational program leading to a university degree and teacher certification. Also, University of Houston, Texas Southern University and Houston Community College freshmen and sophomores are attending evening classes and work in the Houston Independent School District as teacher aides during the day. Many students need this extra income to be able to stay in school. The teacher aide program component is becoming an important source of experienced future urban teachers.

Work-Earn-Learn: The Houston Independent School District pays univeristy third and fourth year undergraduate students and graduate students for substitute teaching in the District. The University offers undergraduate evening classes to accommodate this program, thereby providing the opportunity for students to substitute teach two or three days per week. This program has helped solve some of the substitute teacher shortage problems in the Houston Independent School District and helps participants gain valuable urban teaching experience. It is not a "sink or swim" activity, however. The participants meet once each month for training programs to assist them in the development of specialized skills.

University Programs to Re-train Present Houston Independent School District Teachers for Teaching in Inner City Schools: Plans have been initiated to attract and hold the best qualified teachers to work in the challenging inner city schools and to find ways to attract and hold teachers who are certified in subject matter areas of critical shortages. These teachers receive extra pay (stipends) for working in these schools and for teaching in critical shortage subject areas. The University of Houston and Texas Southern University have developed systematic programs to retrain non-inner city teachers for teaching in inner city shools as well as to assist teachers to achieve certification in the critical shortage subject matter areas.

Substitute Teacher Training Program: Recognizing the special needs of substitute teachers, the University of Houston and Texas Southern University in cooperation with the Houston Independent School District developed twenty two-hour in-service classes to assist the substitute to better meet the demands faced by substitutes in the classroom. One emphasis in this program is placed on topics of classroom management. A second emphasis is placed on skills as the basic

mechanics of filling out school district forms, understanding of pertinent school district policies, procedures and laws and the use of adopted textbooks and materials. A third emphasis is "last minute lesson planning". This program has been successful in getting former urban teachers back to the classroom because of the re-training provided and the opportunity to practice these skills as substitute teachers.

High School for the Teaching Profession: The Houston Independent School District is presently considering a proposal from the University of Houston and Texas Southern University to develop a High School for the Teaching Profession. H.I.S.D. is nationally known for its magnet school programs. Currently, there are 13 such schools: Health Professions; Communications; Engineering; Fine Arts; Foreign Language; Law Enforcement; Petrochemical Field; Music and Play Development; Basic Skills; Aero Dynamics; Math and Science; College Prep; and Performing Arts. Currently under consideration is a proposal for a High School for the Teaching Profession on or near the campuses of the University of Houston and Texas Southern University. High school juniors and seniors who have an interest in working as classroom teachers, teacher's aides, or substitute teachers would attend this magnet high school.

The High School for the Teaching Professions will be designed to attract students with special talents associated with quality teaching from throughout the Houston Independent School District and to give these students an unusually strong academic preparation in mathematics, science and communication skills. College and University instructors and professors will provide part of the instruction on the campuses of the University of Houston, Texas Southern University and Houston Community College.

A CONCLUDING WORD

Attracting and holding quality teachers in urban schools is difficult. The program discussed herein represents an attack on this problem that has much promise for success. It is a multi-faceted effort focusing both on early recruitment and retraining. Moreover, the program reflects a sound sociological footing and, importantly, capitalizes as well on the human and conceptual resources resident in the university and in the urban school system served. Those seeking examples of ways in which universities and public agencies may collaboratively and productively address problems may find such in this program.